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AUTHOR Trotter, Gwendolyn
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ABSTRACT

This paper offers guidelines for an institution preparing for an evaluation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The model includes consideration of the institution's guiding philosophy, the knowledge base frequently found attached to course syllabi, curriculum delivery mechanisms (instructional strategies, techniques, and methods), support services, evaluation, and final products identification. Other areas unique to the institution can be added to the model. Areas are outlined that should be questioned and discussed; e.g., design and delivery of curriculum, clinical experiences and school relationships, and faculty development. Areas are identified in which practical solutions to current problems or difficulties are possible. It is pointed out that blame or denial of realities may offer a focus for constructive change if these attitudes are faced honestly. (JD)

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GWENDOLYN TROTTER
GRAMBLING STATE UNIVERSITY

PITFALLS OF THE NCATE PROCESS: ONE PERSPECTIVE

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Remember when we were kids and we said, "I never get to do anything--I've never had--All my friends have---We don't ever." But parents or guardians stepped in to show us that *NEVER* was neither accurate nor even close to the truth. Now let's think of being adults, do you remember the last time that you heard, "nobody ever listens to us--he never lets me use my skills--she never does anything right--we never have faculty development--we don't have a curriculum--we've never evaluated anything--they get all the resources--not the college of education--we don't do research--we're not in their league--we will never be able to match all the criteria and standards with positive information. This starts the NCATE PITFALL scenario. This scenario is a dangerous and often concealing trap. One of the most important concerns as you start the NCATE task is to leave blame out on the lawn. Also, remember what your parents and guardians taught you years ago, never and all and ever are often inaccurately placed and of course overstate what is real. To avoid the pitfall scenario let's deal with real issues .

Reality of Current Program

Design and Delivery of Curriculum

We all have catalogs and brochures which spell out our specific programs and course offerings. Catalogs are current and course descriptions are current and relevant because they've been updated. Tie catalog data to course syllabi and your curriculum, which some of us indicate that we don't have, begins to emerge. From this data you can backtrack and start asking questions about your UNIT(Remember NCATE is judging the health of the entire unit). Questions that you should ask are:

- What have we been doing in our teacher education program?
- What do we want to do in our teacher education program?
- Are we on the same train and tracks, as faculty, when we view curriculum, delivery of that curriculum and our final product?
- Have we set standards as to what we want our products to look like?

When you can determine what you want your final products to look like--look at your graduates? What can they do as a result of your training? Does this meet your standards? At this point its time to go back and develop a conceptual framework or model for your teacher education program(Figure 1). This isn't new--it's what you currently have--it's simply illustrating what you've been doing for the past ten years. It forces your unit to organize what you've been doing. The meat of this model should

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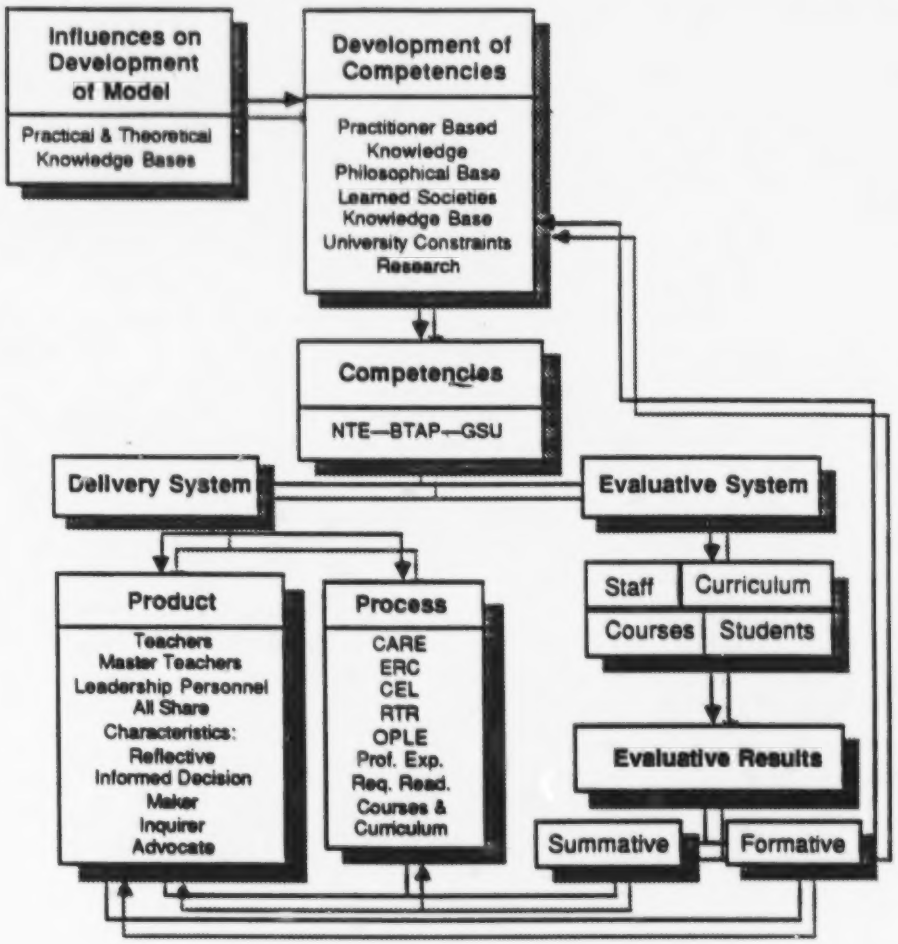


Grambling Teacher Education Accountability Model (TEAM)

Figure 1. Teacher Education Model

consist of your guiding philosophy, knowledge base which frequently is found attached to course syllabi, curriculum delivery mechanisms(Instructional strategies, techniques and methods), support services, evaluation and final products identified. Other areas unique to your institution can be added to the model. Another reality is that this model must be dynamic and changing and not etched in stone for the next twenty years. Some of the changes that are bound to occur are in the area of teacher assessment, portfolio development, greater sensitivity to global concerns, etc.

You have a program with a set of syllabi and learning activities that were designed by knowledgeable faculty in your college. They might not be updated but they're there. Many of you have goals or aims and even behavioral objectives on the syllabi. The updating and scrutinizing of syllabi is a non NCATE task that should be going on as you assess and apportion competencies and learning outcomes from course to course. It becomes an NCATE task as you start addressing learned societies in the NCATE process(preconditional stage). It is important that you view this stage and this activity as NCATE and non NCATE. What is your goal as you consider syllabi: improved, enhanced, systematic , accountable delivery of teacher education program to yield certain "teacher products" that can take their place in the professional ranks?

Clinical Experiences and Relationships with the Schools

Mention observation/participation and the never-no not ever syndrome returns again. Add to it collaboration and relationships with the schools and conversation almost ceases. In many institutions this is the case---not in yours. Once more go back to what you have been doing and illustrate--pull the pieces of papers and experiences together. Pull human resources together early in the process to talk about the type and quality of experiences that students are getting. Also, its a perfect time to determine if the schools are receiving or only giving. It's important at this stage to identify key, concerned and committed school people who are on or off of your teacher education council--many who have worked with your students for years-formally or informally. Tap these resources. Don't wait three months or three weeks before the NCATE visit. Don't pursue such a relationship only for NCATE! In fact, its a good time to repeat the question of whether we're going through this process only for NCATE. Don't forget alumni who work with your students. Their knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of your program is critical. Their continued involvement in your program contributes to the "health" of your unit.. Clinical experiences and relationships that have gone unnoticed and rewarded are given prominence and put into a system. It's not that you don't have them--often it's that we haven't taken the time to document. As you start documenting--logic forces us to enhance and redefine--which is as it should be.

Faculty Development

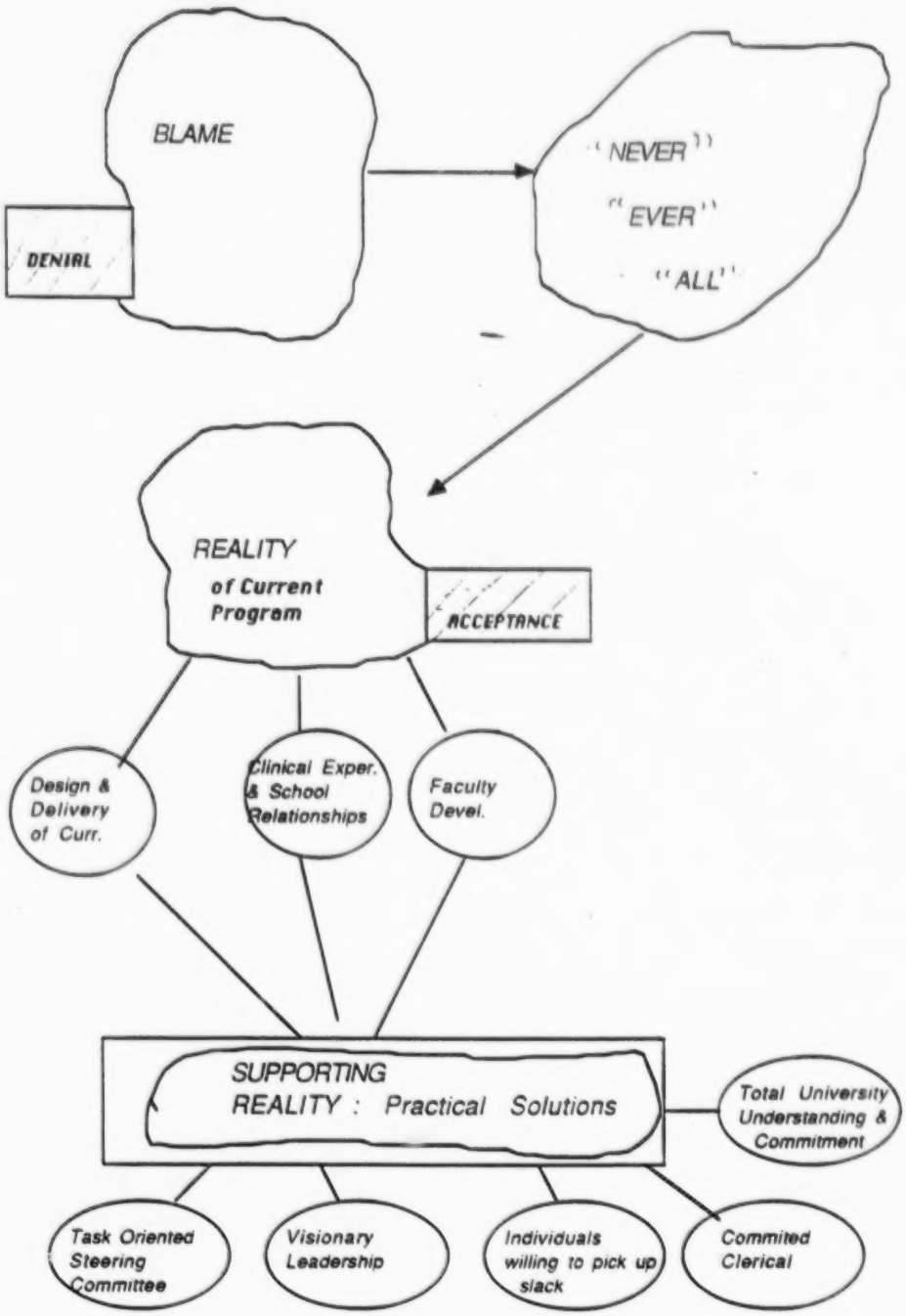
Faculty from various institutions have been in national meetings--5,000 miles from their institutions --"bemoaning" the state of faculty development on their campuses. You are in a faculty development session today. Faculty development is ongoing. If we're visionary and creative, we begin to pull those conferences, workshops, work with the schools, grant writing sessions, seminars, speakers into a total package. Where are the holes? Who is going--why are they going--what are the outcomes--how are the outcomes assessed? How are we using information from sessions? Before you

know it you either see very clearly that you do have a faculty development component in your program--once more possibly not as organized or as outcome driven as you'd like. But it's probably there. Once more document, systematize it and view it as important to a quality teacher education program that goes beyond NCATE accreditation.

Supporting Reality

Data from various reports indicate that institutions are having difficulty with design of curriculum and delivery of curriculum. At this point institutions and faculty have moved from the denial and blaming phase to that of acceptance. In addition, several have not met the faculty development standard for both basic and advanced programs. There are of course other problem areas from one institution to another--often self diagnosed before NCATE team arrives. The less blaming, the faster that the institution moves out of the denial phase and into acceptance of task.. Even with acceptance of tasks and realities of current program, problem areas often evolve from lack of agreement among faculty and staff about what they actually have in terms of curriculum and faculty development. There are some theoretical suggestions which could be made--however, real problems should be defined with real and practical suggestions. The pitfalls of the NCATE Process should be reviewed periodically to keep from getting caught in the trap of blame(Figure 2).

Figure 2. Pitfalls of the NCATE Process



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Practical Concerns

Experience with several institutions and their NCATE pursuits echo several practical concerns as one moves from the realities of current program. Acceptance of tasks and desire to support reality with practical solutions becomes a part of the institutional NCATE process. These concerns include writing team, ownership of NCATE process, lack of professional cores, lack of well sequenced courses, lack of well defined field experiences, lack of models or faith in ability to develop a model, lack of clarity in outcome objectives and monitoring system. Often we keep raising concerns in a real way and should be concerned--but fail to offer solutions. The NCATE process does not imply that you should self study unit "to death" with concerns and problems. Don't hesitate to come up with solutions and to begin implementing. *No, you're not cheating.* Do document, just as you would any other changes in programming.

What are we doing that's right?

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enhanced programs that are dynamic and exciting to be involved in. Practical suggestions and solutions would include the following:

- Request volunteers for a task oriented steering committee(small but sturdy critical mass)--without volunteers--appoint--don't forget accountability measures and monitoring even for NCATE steering committee--change committee if you must! YOU refers to unit leadership.

- Identify individuals in your unit who are usually willing to pick up the slack--start reducing their load and plugging them into NCATE related tasks--build on your critical mass

- Identify clerical early on who will develop a sense of ownership in the NCATE process

- Interpersonal skills of NCATE steering committee are critical as well as consultants brought in to assist--Find a top notch personable consultant to conduct a simulated NCATE visit well in advance of actual visit

- Develop strong and systematic faculty development sessions around NCATE process

- Organize a documents room from the preconditional process through NCATE process

- Don't let time become the enemy--procrastination--missed deadlines should not be accepted--especially if process is well organized and timelines are published

- Celebrate successes along the route to NCATE visitation--de-emphasize failures-except that collaboration should take place as individuals continue to work on sessions and documents that won't make it--give help when needed--provide human and physical resources--sometimes its only a matter of sitting down and talking through what we have or want and letting someone else illustrate it

- Don't get caught in expecting all criteria and compliance criterion to have precision and conciseness--make your own precision when necessary

- Realize that your program is unique--your students are unique and your faculty--it's your program--are you doing what you say you are doing and what you want to do?

Some institutions have been devastated by the NCATE process. If we return to the denial phase we might find some answers. Others have indicated a real growth period for institution, college and unit. It's time to start blaming NCATE for helping us look inside and becoming what we want to be as a healthy unit preparing "healthy and effective professionals."

NCATE NOTEBOOK

- BLAME(DENIAL)
- REALITY OF CURRENT PROGRAM (ACCEPTANCE)
- CONCERNS
- PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

PRACTICAL TALK

1. How much blame and denial is evident at your institution? Where is it coming from? Is it constructive? Can it be maintained? Does it have a history?

2. What would it take to move your unit, institution to acceptance if they're not already there?

Key players?

Key actions?

Timeline?

3. What are your major concerns about NCATE?

4. Identify potential solutions to/for your concerns?

5. Practical Talk: